



## **Large Student Enrollments in EFL Programs: Challenges and Consequences**

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### **Bio Data:**

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### **Abstract**

Year after year, EFL and translation programs at King Saud University are experiencing significant increases in female freshman student enrollments. This study aims to investigate the effect of female freshman student enrollment figures in EFL programs on student achievement and attitudes, program staffing, classroom instruction, management, assessment, resources and facilities utilization on the basis of female faculty demographic, female faculty teaching load, number of courses and total number of credit hours offered by the department, freshman students' enrollment statistics and grammar test scores. Female students, instructors, department head and program coordinators' perceptions of the causes and outcomes of large female freshman student enrollments will be reported.

### **1. Introduction**

In the past five decades, college and school classrooms in many parts of the world have become progressively larger. Large enrollments, as Lewis (1997) found, result in problems such as: finding qualified teachers on a short notice, finding enough portable classrooms, exhausted teacher pool of qualified candidates, lack of space in schools, the extra burden on administrators who have to evaluate and lead more personnel, confusion over program assessment, such as the lack of initial baseline data that would allow

districts to demonstrate the effectiveness of Class Size Reduction (CSR), and the extra work required of teachers.

Like many parts of the world, English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) and translation programs at Saudi state universities are experiencing dramatic increases in freshman student enrollments. For example, twenty years ago, the pre-medical division for women at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, had 400 female students and twenty four instructors most of whom were native speakers of English. In Fall 2003, it had 850 students and only seven instructors. Fifteen years ago, the author used to teach one section of a course with 20-25 students. In Fall 2004, she was teaching five sections of freshman grammar, with a total of 350 students with an average of 70 students per section. In Spring 2005, the number of enrollees in the same course went up to 400 with 65-74 students per section. Unfortunately, the current staffing status, especially at women's departments, resources and facilities do not accommodate the enrollment demands. EFL and translation programs are having difficulties in retaining experienced native-speaking instructors and in hiring qualified substitutes.

The aim of the present study is to describe female freshman student enrollment status at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Since enrollment figures should not be dealt with in isolation from other variables, this study will examine the effects of large female freshman student enrollments at COLT upon the staffing status, student achievement, students and instructors' attitudes, classroom instruction, management and assessment, and utilization of resources and facilitates. This study will also shed some light on the causes of larger freshman enrollments in the past few years.

The impact of large freshman enrollments on student achievement and attitudes, EFL program staffing, classroom instruction and assessment revealed by the present study will help policy-makers at the department, college, university, Ministry of Higher Education and parents understand the relationship between existing conditions and their outcomes. This study is intended to help policymakers understand the benefits of class-size reduction (CSR) and how it enhances student achievement. Some of the costs associated with large classes is a reduction in teacher quality and a shortage of personnel and

facilities. The study stresses the importance of ensuring that enough well-trained teachers should be available to meet the increasing need.

## **2. Study Questions**

This study aims to answer the following questions: (i) What is the female freshman student enrollment status at COLT and what is the student attrition rate? (ii) What is the effect of the annual increase in female freshman student enrollment at COLT on students' academic achievement level? (iii) What are female freshman students and instructors' attitudes towards learning in and teaching large classes? (iv) What is the effect of the annual increase in freshman students' enrollment at COLT on program staffing and faculty teaching load? (v) What is the effect of the annual increase in freshman students' enrollment at COLT on classroom instruction, management and assessment as perceived by the students and their instructors? (vi) What is the effect of annual increase in freshman students' enrollment at COLT on resources and facilities utilization (college infrastructure)? (vii) What are the causes of the dramatic annual increase in female freshman student enrollments at COLT?

## **3. Literature Review**

Class size at elementary, secondary and college levels has been the focus of educational research for five decades. Prior studies have investigated several aspects of class size such as the effect of class size on instruction, its effect on achievement and attitudes, the optimal class size, and class size reduction funds. Studies focusing on each of these aspects are reported below.

### **3.1 Effect on Instruction and Class Management**

According to Krieger (2003), teachers in small-size classes use more facial expressions, more eye contact, more positive remarks, spend more time on direct instruction than on classroom management and work more often in small groups than they do in the regular-size classes. In addition, small classes in grades K-3, as Achilles, Krieger, Finn and Sharp (2003) concluded, boost students' academic performance in all subjects and in prosocial behavior. Two other studies provided evidence that teachers spend more time on task and with individual students because of

less time spent on dealing with disciplinary problems and interactions not related to learning objectives, compared with teachers in larger classes. Halbach, Ehrle, Zahorik and Molnar (2001) also found that smaller classes in grades 1-3 (15 students per teacher) had fewer discipline problems, more time for instruction and individualization, varied instructional strategies, and more content and in-depth coverage. In a five-year class-size-reduction program implemented in 80 Wisconsin schools called SAGE, Zahorik (1999) conducted an evaluative study in 30 SAGE schools. He found that small classes have three effects leading to increased individualization: fewer discipline problems, greater knowledge of students, and more teacher enthusiasm. In a similar CSR program in the Detroit Public Schools, Thomas (2001) reported that over half of teachers and administrators agreed that student achievement and teacher morale improved as a result of the CSR. Program teachers, administrators, and parents appreciated that CSR resulted in individualized instruction, decreased discipline problems, and better monitoring of student progress. Finn (1997) found that the advantage of small classes is greater for minority students and students in inner-city schools than for white students, probably because students are more actively engaged in learning compared to their peers in larger classes. Data from a literature review and interviews with second language teachers from schools and community-based organizations indicated that small classes are beneficial in teaching and learning second languages for communication purposes (Diamantidis, 1998).

### **3.2 Effect on Academic Achievement**

Reduced class size proved to have a positive effect on student achievement at the elementary, secondary and college levels. Results of studies by Oberg (1993), Haenn (2002), Mazzola (1989), Robinson and Wittebols (1986) suggest that smaller class sizes produce the largest and most consistent test gains among disadvantaged elementary school children.

In a literature review on the effect of secondary-school size upon student outcomes, Fowler (1992) concluded that large secondary schools with a graduating class above 750 appeared to have deleterious effects on student attitudes, achievement, and voluntary

participation. Monk and Haller found that curricular adequacy was reached at a small high school level (that is, a graduating class of 100).

At the college level, Dillon, Kokkelenberg and Christy (2002) found that class size negatively affects grades. Undergraduate students' average grade point average declines as class size increases, precipitously up to class sizes of ten, and more gradually but monotonically through class sizes of 400 plus. The probability of getting a B plus or better declines from 0.9 for class sizes of 20 to about 0.5 for class sizes of 120, and almost 0.4 for class sizes of 400. Becker and Powers (2001) studied the effects of class size and other class-specific variables on learning of college economics. They found that beginning class size was significant and negatively correlated to learning economics - partly since students in larger classes were significantly more likely to withdraw before taking the posttest.

### **3.3 Effect on Attitude**

Research findings have indicated that class size affects students and teachers' attitudes. Smith and Glass (1980) reviewed 59 studies and found a substantial relationship between class size and teacher and student attitudes, as well as instruction. Study findings by Glass and Down (1979) also indicated that lowered class size increases student achievement and improves school attitudes. Counter argument indicates there is little educational payoff and great monetary expense in small reductions in class size. Smith and Glass (1979) examined the relationship between class size and measures of outcomes such as student attitudes and behavior, classroom processes and learning environment, and teacher satisfaction. Small class size was associated with higher quality classroom environments, better student attitudes, and greater teacher satisfaction. Findings also indicated that class size effects were related to pupil age, with effects most noticeable for children 12 years and under and least apparent for pupils 18 or over. In 1984, the North Gibson School Corporation (Princeton, Indiana) began a reduced class size program as part of the PRIME TIME project investigating the effects of smaller classes on pupils' academic achievement, self-concepts, and attitudes toward school (Swan et al, 1987). Swan et al found significant gains in achievement, self-concept and attitude towards school for both first- and second-graders.

At the college level, Edgell (1981) studied the comparative effects of large and traditional-sized remedial mathematics classes on college students' aptitude and attitude. Two large pre-algebra classes of 129 and 121 students and traditional-sized classes ranging in size from 30 to 40 students were assessed by informal observations, a placement tool and an attitude measure. For the students in the large classes, there was a significant negative change in attitude. Although some negative change in attitude occurred for students in the traditional-sized classes, there was a significant difference in negativity between the two study groups. Gunter and Gunter (1994) also found a statistically significant difference between class size and college students' attitudes on the computer usefulness subscale. Students in smaller classes perceived computers to be more useful after completion of a computer literacy course than students in larger classes. In Japan, Locastro (1989) investigated teacher and students' attitudes towards second language instruction in large classes at the university and secondary levels. She found that the "average large class size" experienced by most teachers was 45 and most students experienced classes of 40-59 students, some much larger. She also found that teachers of large classes faced pedagogical, managerial and affective problems. Problems were seen to arise with classes over the size of 39 students and begin to occur under the size of 51 students.

### **3.4 The Optimal Class Size**

Since small-size classes have a positive effect on achievement and attitudes, this would pose a question about the optimal class size. Goettler-Sopko (1990) indicated that class size is a complex problem that depends on many factors. The central theme that runs through the research literature is that academic achievement does not necessarily improve with the reduction of student/teacher ratio unless appropriate learning styles and effective teaching styles are utilized. It is also evident that no single class size is best for all grade levels and all subject areas. However, based on recent research studies, there is considerable agreement that smaller class sizes seem to result in higher achievement among students who are economically disadvantaged; students with lower academic ability seem to do better in smaller classes; class size may affect student attitudes more significantly than it affects achievement; a direct effect of large class size is to lower the

morale and increase the stress of teachers; and there is typically little to be gained from reductions in class size that do not bring class size below 30 (Goettler-Sopko, 1990).

At the elementary school level, Wright et al (1977) investigated the differences between different sized classes in grades four and five of Toronto schools. Teachers and students from 11 schools were assigned to 34 classes of either 16, 23, 30, or 37 students. Questionnaires and attitude scales were used to measure teachers' expectations and attitudes, students' opinions and attitudes toward their classes, and parents' opinions. In addition, student achievement in reading comprehension, vocabulary, mathematics problem-solving, mathematics concepts, art, and composition was measured, and students' academic self-concepts were assessed. Results showed that varying class size produced few changes in classroom functioning, and most differences between class sizes were relatively small. Students were addressed as individuals significantly more frequently as class size was reduced below 30. Other differences included increased mathematics concepts scores in classes of 16, increased verbal participation in classes of 16 or 23, more noise in classes of 30 or 37, increased scores on "indicators of quality" in classes of 16 or 23, more frequent reading instruction in classes of 16, and increased complaints about lack of art instruction in classes of 37.

In foreign language classrooms, Horne (1970) indicated that the optimal class size for foreign language instruction is between 5 and 9 students. The policy statement of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) concerning the English teacher's workload stated that the teacher of English should have direct instructional responsibility for no more than 100 students (The Ad Hoc Committee on English Teacher Workload in Secondary Schools, 1973). Locastro (1989) reported that Japanese college students preferred classes of 11-20. Johnson (2001) recommended classes with not more than 20 students. In a study that focused on three "Lab" schools which were established in 1994-1995 in Durham, North Carolina, Haenn (2002) indicated that State standards call for class sizes of 23 students for grades K-2, and 26 for grades 3-5. The average class size for the Lab schools ranged from 14 to 21 for grades K-2 and from 11 to 22.5 for grades 3-5. The average class size for the comparison schools ranged from 13.9 to 20.3 for grades K-2, and from 14.3 to 20.3 for grades 3-5. When asked what class size was "just right," responses from school staff ranged from 16-21 students; by contrast parent

responses ranged from 10-19. Data collected from 47 school districts of the Metropolitan School Study Council showed a progressively larger difference as class size decreases. He found that in the elementary grades a significant break occurs between the 11-15 and 16-20, and the 21-25 and 26-30 class size intervals. In the secondary grades, the only significant break occurs between the 11-15 and 16-20 class size intervals (Vincent, 1968).

### **3.5 Class Size Reduction Funds**

In some countries, class size reduction funds were established to help recruit more teachers and provide professional development for new and veteran teachers. For example, in the USA, Naik, Casserly and Uro (2000) surveyed members of the Council of the Great City Schools to determine how they were using federal class size reduction funds in the 2000-2001 school year. Results indicated that the federal class size reduction program improved student achievement and received strong teacher support. These funds enabled the responding school systems to hire approximately 4,303 teachers, and, in fact, all 36 major cities used their federal class size reduction funds to hire new teachers. Thirty-one cities used some of their federal class size reduction monies to provide professional development for new and veteran teachers. Urban schools spent their federal class size reduction funds in 2000-2001 in approximately the same ways as they did in 1999-2000, with the exception of a somewhat increased emphasis on recruiting efforts. The class size reduction program is becoming an essential ingredient of urban school reform efforts.

To conclude, many prior studies used questionnaire-surveys and interviews to assess the effect of large class size on elementary, secondary, and college student achievement and attitudes in different subject fields. Several variables were the focus of those studies such as achievement, attitudes, class discipline, teachers-student interaction, classroom management and instruction. However, studies that assess the effect of large college student enrollments in EFL environments are lacking. This study will examine the impact of large enrollments on several variables as perceived by college students and instructors at COLT.



#### 4. Subjects

A random sample of 100 female students majoring in translation at the College of Languages and Translation (COLT), at King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia participated in the study. The subjects were enrolled in the freshman class of Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. Freshman students at the COLT take 19 hours of English language courses as follows: listening (3 hours), speaking (3 hours), reading (4 hours), writing (4 hours), vocabulary building (3 hours) and grammar (2 hours).

In addition, a sample of 20 instructors who are currently teaching English language courses to freshman students (Level One students) or have taught Level One students at COLT in Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 were selected. 15% of the instructor sample hold a Ph.D. degree, 15% have an M.A. degree and 70% have a B.A. degree.

Finally, the department head and two program coordinators at the Department of European Languages and Translation at COLT (English program only) were also interviewed.

#### 5. Data Collection

**Student Data:** Female freshman student enrollment statistics at COLT were collected for six semesters: Fall 2000, Spring 2001, Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. The number of sections, section enrollment, number of withdrawn students and number of repeating students were obtained for those semesters. To show the effect of increasing student enrollment on achievement in EFL, only female freshman students' grammar final exam scores for six semesters were obtained: Fall 2000, Spring 2001, Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005. All of the students in those groups were taught by the author. They studied the same grammatical structures, used the same grammar textbook and took the same pretest and final exam. Other courses could not be compared as they were taught by different instructors, using different teaching and assessment techniques.

**Instructor Data:** Demographic data about the female faculty at COLT such as nationality, degree, teaching load, and courses they teach were collected for Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005.

**Course Data:** The number of sections and total number of credit hours offered at each of the ten college levels were also obtained for Fall 2000, Spring 2001, Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004 and Spring 2005.

**Questionnaires and Interviews:** The questionnaire was e-mailed to 125 students and 80% were returned. In addition, all of the instructors, department head and program coordinators were interviewed by the author. The student questionnaire, and instructor and administrator questionnaire-surveys consisted of open-ended question (See Appendices 1, 2, and 3).

## **6. Data Analysis**

To describe the annual increase in female freshman student enrollment at COLT, the percentage of withdrawn students and the percentage of repeating students, the median and range of section enrollment were computed for the six semesters.

To find out the effect of annual increase in freshman students' enrollment on their academic achievement, the % of passing students in the grammar course was calculated for each semester (as an example). To find out whether there is a significant difference in freshman students' means scores in grammar over the six semesters, analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was calculated using the final exam scores as the response variable and the pretest scores as the covariate to correct for chance differences that existed when the subjects were assigned to treatment groups. This correction will result in the adjustment of group means for pre-existing differences caused by the sampling error and reduction of the size of the error variance of the analysis.

To find out the effect of large freshman enrollments on program staffing and on faculty teaching load, the total number of hours offered to all the sections of the ten college levels and the teaching load for all the female faculty was calculated in hours.

To find out the effect of large freshman student enrollment on attitudes, on classroom instruction, class management, assessment practices and resources and facilities utilization, students and instructors' responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires and interviews were sorted out and analyzed.

To find out the causes of annual increase in female freshman students' enrollment, department head and program coordinators' responses to the open-ended questions of the interview were sorted out and analyzed.

## 7. Results and Discussion

### 7.1 Female Freshman Enrollment Status

Results presented in Table (1) show that the total number of female freshman students increased from 84 students in Fall 2000 to 393 students in Spring 2005. In 4 years, female freshman students' enrollment figures quadrupled. Since Fall 2003, each semester has been witnessing an increase of at least 50 students over the previous semester.

**Table (1)**  
**Student Enrollment in Grammar 1**

<i>Semester</i>	<i># sections</i>	<i>Students per section</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>	<i>Withdrawn Students</i>	<i>Took Final Exam</i>	<i>Passing Students</i>
Fall 2000 (Semester 1)	2	40-42	82	28%	59	66%
Spring 2001 (Semester 2)	2	37-40	77	11.7%	68	84%
Fall 2003 (Semester 3)	5	47-48-51-51-54	251	20%	200	42.5%
Spring 2004 (Semester 4)	5	57-65-66-67-70	325	30%	237	56%
Fall 2004 (Semester 5)	5	72-72-74-74-76	368	25%	275	29.8%
Spring 2005 (Semester 6)	6	39-65-68-73-74-74	393	27%	287	35.8%

The attrition rate was 20% (51 students) in Fall 2003, it went up to 30% (98 students) in Spring 2004, and was 25% (93 students) in Fall 2004, and 27% (106 students) in Spring 2005. Few students drop each week. Many re-register in the grammar 1 course the following semester adding up to the total number of enrollees (See Table 1).

In the academic year 2000/2001, there were 2 level-one sections, with a median number of 40 students per section. Since Fall 2003 (3 years later), there have been 5 level-one sections, with an increasing number of section enrollment from one semester to

the next. In Fall 2003, the median section enrollment was 51; in Spring 2004 it went up to 66, and in Fall 2004 it increased to 74 (See Table 1).

The percentage of students who took the grammar course over, either because they failed the grammar course, or because they dropped it and re-registered it in the following semester was 28% in Fall 2003, and went up to 45% in Fall 2004 (See Table 2).

**Table (2)**  
**% of Students Who Took the Grammar Course Over (Repeaters)**

Semester	# of sections	Grand Total	Course Repeaters	% of repeaters
Fall 2003	5	251	70	28%
Fall 2004	5	368	165	45%

## 7.2 Effect of Enrollment Increase on Academic Achievement

Table (1) shows the total number of students who took the grammar final exam and the % of students who passed the grammar course. It can be seen that 66% (total = 59) of the students passed the grammar course in Fall 2000, 87% (total = 68) passed in Spring 2001, 42.5% (total = 200) passed in Fall 2003, 56% (total = 237) passed in Spring 2004, and 29.8% (total = 275) passed in Fall 2005, and 35% (total = 287) passed in Spring 2005. It can be noted that as the class size increases, the percentage of passing students decreases.

ANCOVA results show significant difference among freshman students' grammar final exam scores, i.e., posttest scores ( $F = 53.84$ ,  $P = < 0.0001$ ,  $df = 1124$ ). The mean scores for female freshman students enrolled in Fall 2000 and Spring 2001 (semesters with low enrollment) were significantly higher than that for those enrolled in Fall 2003, Spring 2004, Fall 2004, and Spring 2005 in which the enrollment was 200 or higher. The effect size was .56. This again shows that the group mean score declines as the class size increases (See Table 3). The above findings show that large student enrollments have had a negative effect on freshman students' academic achievement in grammar. As the number of enrollees increases, students' achievement level declines. This finding is consistent with findings of prior studies in the literature. Dillon, Kokkelenberg and Christy (2002) found that class size negatively affects grades. Average grade point average declines as the class size increases. The probability of getting a B plus or better declines from 0.9 for class sizes to 20 to about 0.5 for class sizes of 120, and almost 0.4 for class sizes of 400. Rieck, Clark and Lopez (1995). found that students enrolled in

Math 107 had a lower attrition rate and a higher rate of satisfactory course completion. Becker and Powers (2001) found that beginning class size was significant and negatively correlated with learning economics-partly, because students in larger classes were significantly more likely to withdraw before taking the posttest.

**Table (3)**  
**The Means, Medians, Ranges, Standard Deviations and Standard Errors of the Grammar Pre and Posttest Scores for the Six Semesters**

	<b>Fall 2000</b>		<b>Spring 2001</b>		<b>Fall 2003</b>	
	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>
<b>N</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>
Mdn	60.0	64.0	55.0	68.0	50.0	52.00
Mean	62.8	64.0	52.4	67.2	46.6	53.28
SD	15.2	16.8	15	13.4	19.92	17.22
SE	1.98	2.2	1.8	1.6	1.4	1.22
Range	4-90	4-94	10-80	22-90	5-90	16-92

\* Total final exam (posttest) mark = 100

**Table (3) Cont'd**

<b>Spring 2004</b>		<b>Fall 2004</b>		<b>Spring 2005</b>	
<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest (Final)</i>
<b>237</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>287</b>
46.0	56.00	48.00	52.00	56	52
47.6	57.52	48.48	52.46	54.06	50.56
15.2	16.48	13.80	14.46	15.52	15.00
0.98	1.08	0.84	0.88	1.12	0.88
6-94	4-100	18-86	12-86	12-70	8-88

### 7.3 Effects on Attitudes

Both students and instructors in the present study had negative attitudes towards learning in and teaching large classes. Students reported that they feel lost, do not have a sense of belonging, cannot concentrate, hesitate to participate and feel left out in a large class. By contrast, when they are in a small class, they reported that they feel that they receive more attention, have a chance to communicate, share in the discussion and classroom activities, receive individualized feedback and are motivated to learn. Instructors in the present study feel that large classes require more energy, are exhausting and difficult to manage.

They cannot create rapport with students and cannot pay attention to each and every individual in a large class.

Students' surveys and instructor interviews revealed negative effects among students and instructors towards large classes, and towards the teaching and learning process in EFL. This finding is also supported by prior research. Cheatham and Jordan (1976) found that small class-individual instructor technique, used in a speech communication course, prompted more favorable student attitudes than did the 40- or 80-student lecture treatments. Likewise, Rieck, Clark and Lopez (1995) found that college students enrolled in Math 107 (i.e. small classes) showed greater gains in positive attitudes towards mathematics.

#### **7.4 Effects on Program Staffing:**

Table (4) shows that the total number of teaching hours that needed to be filled in Level One were between 372 in Fall 2003 and 455 in Spring 2005, with about 50% of the total number of teaching hours offered to Levels One and Two sections i.e. half of the female faculty.

The department head and program coordinators reported that the EFL program at COLT is severely under-staffed. Shortage is always solved by merging classes, by raising the teaching load of instructors, and by hiring local recruits who have a B.A. degree, and who are sometimes inadequately qualified.

The department head, program coordinators, and instructors at COLT believe that the optimal class size should be 25-30 students. If freshman section enrollment is reduced to 30, the total number of Level One sections will be twice as many (between 10-13 sections for Fall 2004 and Spring 2005). This means that an additional 5-6 language instructors with an M.A. degree (teaching load =18 hrs per week) need be hired to cover the teaching hours for the extra 5-6 Level One sections only (See Tables 4 & 5 & 6).

Tables (7 & 8) show that most of the instructors in the EFL program are teaching full load which depends on the degree and academic status. The teaching load is reduced for the department head, coordinators, T.A.'s who are pursuing their graduate studies, and those who are sick. When the department had 29 instructors in Fall 2003, the teaching load for some professors went up to 23 hours per week (with an overload of 9 hours per

week). Since Fall 2003, the percentage of instructors with a B.A. degree has ranged between 25%-30% of the total EFL female faculty at COLT, most of whom are local recruits (Saudi non-native speakers). Moreover, the department has only one native-English speaking instructor, one non-Arab, and the rest are either Saudi or from other Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Iraq and the Sudan.

At the beginning of each semester, the department head is overwhelmed by the large enrollments in the freshman class. She has to search for and recruit more faculty on short notice. In such a case, foreign recruits are impossible to contact and recruit, and local recruits with a B.A. degree are the only option available.

**Table (4)**  
**Total Number of Teaching Hours Required for All the Sections at All the Levels**

Levels	Fall 2003		Spring 2004		Fall 2004		Spring 2005	
	<i>Sections</i>	<i>Hrs</i>	<i>Sections</i>	<i>hrs</i>	<i>Sections</i>	<i>Hrs</i>	<i>Sections</i>	<i>hrs</i>
One	5	100 (26.8%)	5	100 (27.7%)	5	100 (23%)	6	120 (26%)
Two	4	80 (21.5%)	4	80 (22%)	5	100 (23%)	5	100 (22%)
Three	3	42	3	42	4	56	4	56
Four	3	36	2	24	3	36	4	48
Five	2	34	2	34	3	51	3	51
Six	2	36	2	36	2	36	2	36
Seven	1	10	1	10	2	20	1	10
Eight	1	12	1	12	1	12	1	12
Nine	1	12	1	12	1	12	1	12
Ten	1	10	1	10	1	10	1	10
Total	23	372	22	360	27	433	28	455

**Table (5)**  
**Total Enrollment and Actual and Optimal Number of Sections Per Level**

	Fall 2004			Spring 2005		
	<i>Total # Students Per Level</i>	<i>Actual # of Sections</i>	<i>Optimal # of sections</i>	<i>Total # Students Per Level</i>	<i>Actual # Sections</i>	<i>Optimal # of sections</i>
Level 1	293	5	10	393	6	13
Level 2	147	5	5	220	5	7
Level 3	128	4	4	155	4	5
Level 4	139	3	5	120	4	4
Level 5	89	3	3	122	3	4
Level 6	62	2	2	65	2	2
Level 7	63	2	2	50	1	2
Level 8	41	1	2	50-55	1	2

Level 9	35	1	1	45	1	1
Level 10	36	1	1	45	1	1
	1033	27	35	1265	28	41

**Table (6)**  
**Distribution of Female COLT Faculty According to Degree**

	Fall 2003		Spring 2004		Fall 2004		Spring 2005	
	<i>Native</i>	<i>Non-native</i>	<i>Native</i>	<i>Non-native</i>	<i>Native</i>	<i>Non-native</i>	<i>Native</i>	<i>Non-native</i>
Ph.D	1	9	1	8	-	9	1	9
M.A.	-	10	-	11	-	13	-	17
B.A.	-	9	-	7	-	10	-	10
Total faculty	29		27		32		37	

**Table (7)**  
**Grand Total of Teaching Load Per Degree**

	Fall 2003		Spring 2004		Fall 2004		Spring 2005	
	# Faculty	Total work Load	# Faculty	Total work Load	# Faculty	Total Work Load	# Faculty	Total Work Load
Ph.D	10	142	9	110	9	134	10	121
M.A.	10	171	11	170	13	224	17	252
B.A.	9	109	7	96	10	118	10	120
Grand Total	29	422	27	376	32	476	37	493

**Table (8)**  
**Instructors' Teaching Load in Hours Per Week**

	Fall 2003	Spring 2004	Fall 2004	Spring 2005
Ph.D	4-4-10-10-12-14-21-22-22-23	6-8-10-10-12-14-14-18-18	8-10-10-14-14-17-18-18-25	5-8-10-10-12-13-14-14-17-18
M.A.	4-8-16-16-19-20-21-22-22-23	4-8-16-16-18-18-18-18-18-18	8-8-12-16-17-18-18-18-18-18-18-19-10	4-8-9-11-14-14-15-16-17-18-18-18-18-18-18-18
B.A.	4-6-8-15-15-15-15-16	4-12-15-15-15-15-15	4-10-12-14-15-15-16-16-16	4-6-6-12-14-15-15-16-16-16
Total faculty	29	27	32	37

The above findings show that increasing freshman student enrollment results in severe female faculty shortage at COLT. This result is also consistent with findings of a study by Sabandar (1989) in Indonesia. Sabandar indicated that the situation at Universitas '45 is



characterized by increasingly large student numbers and a severe instructor shortage. Instructors have complained of large classes, and found it impossible to reconcile the attainment of the university goals with the actual classroom situation. This has led to declining achievement and is threatening the institution's popularity. In Japan, Locastro (1989) found that teachers of large classes faced pedagogical, managerial and affective problems.

### **7.5 Effects on Classroom Instruction**

Student questionnaires and instructor interviews revealed that both freshman students and instructors believe that large class sizes inhibit small group activities and individualized instruction, because of the noise level and lack of space in the classroom. The instructor does not have sufficient time to check each student's work. Instructors indicated that they do not have enough time to pay attention to each and give every student a chance to speak or participate. As a result, individual students do not receive sufficient attention from the instructor.

When classes are large, the instructors pointed out that they cannot accommodate the wide individual differences (ability-levels) available in class. Poor students do not get enough attention. They cannot have a one-on-one contact and do not have adequate time to follow their students' progress. Students feel that the instructor calls and focuses on those who sit in the front row. They do not have a chance to answer or practice.

Large class enrollments also result in discipline problems even at the college level. Some students talk in class and make it difficult for the majority to hear the instructor and concentrate due to increasing the noise level. Many students might mishear an answer or a point. They pay less attention and are distracted by those who talk in class. They are psychologically inhibited from participation. Instructors spend a lot of time taking attendance. They cannot remember names and faces and cannot call on all the students.

Moreover, over-crowded classes have a negative effect on assessment. Extra work is required of instructors when classes are large. All of the instructors reported that grading 200-300 essays (per in-term test) is exhausting, tedious, and time consuming. Writing instructors reported that grading students' essays is very time-consuming. Testing students

individually and orally in the speaking course is also very time-consuming, no matter how short the questions are.

When the author was teaching 59 and 70 students in Fall 2000 and Spring 2001, she used to give 7 quizzes over the whole semester (a quiz every other week). When the number of students went up to 200, she gave 4 in-terms tests, when it went beyond 250 students, she could only give 2 in-term tests. Other instructors can only give 2 in-term test per course per semester. Instead of preparing one version on the test per course, she has to prepare three test versions for each in-term, each with two forms to accommodate for the 5 grammar sections she teaches. As the class size increases, the test length decreases. In Spring 2004, the author had to grade 900 pages, in Fall 2004, she had to grade 1100 pages for the Grammar I final exam within a few days. She graded 15 hours a day to meet the deadline set by the Registration Department for submitting the grade sheets.

Finally, the negative effects of large student enrollment on classroom instruction in EFL are also consistent with findings of Coleman and Lewis' studies. Coleman (1989) surveyed 33 teachers providing remedial ESL instruction to large classes with over 100 students in Nigerian universities. Results showed that the most common difficulties were in the areas of relationships with individual students, classroom control, and grading of written work. Lewis (1997) found that large enrollments result in problems such as: Finding qualified teachers on short notice, finding enough portable classrooms, exhausted teacher pool of qualified candidates; lack of space in schools; the extra burden on administrators who have to evaluate and lead more personnel; confusion over program assessment, such as the lack of initial baseline data that would allow districts to demonstrate the effectiveness of Class Size Reduction (CSR); and the extra work required of teachers in higher grades.

#### **7.6 Effects on Resources and Facilities Utilization**

Many classrooms at COLT are small and cannot seat more than 50 students (the average classroom space is less than one meter per student). As a result, students are squeezed in and some cannot find a chair to sit and cannot squeeze in extra seats. Students are crowded by the door. Those who sit in the back, find it difficult to see what is written on the white board. During in-terms, classrooms are not spacious enough as more space

between the seats is needed. Rows are too close that the instructor cannot walk in between the seats to check the students' work. Seats cannot be rearranged in a U-shape or a semi-circle for small group activities. Many instructors seek help with test invigilation. During tests, some students can easily cheat as seats are too close to each other. The four language labs available at COLT, which are used for teaching listening and interpreting courses, do not seat more than 40 students. Each of the two computer labs has only 20 PC's. The labs are always fully booked and most listening hours cannot be conducted in the lab, in which case, a cassette players needs to be used in the classroom. Additional numbers of cassette players are needed for classroom use. When played in the classroom, the students cannot hear nor comprehend as classrooms are not sound-proof and no amplification systems are available. Classrooms cannot be dimmed for overhead or LCD projector's use, and no portable screens are available. Only one LCD projector is available at the department. Finally, no microphones and loud speakers are available.

### **7.7 Causes of large freshman enrollments**

Large freshman enrollments are attributed to several factors such as the increasing numbers of high school graduates and hence increasing numbers of students interested in majoring in translation.

In the past few years, Saudi universities have applied an open admission policy, where students can be admitted to any college of their choice, as soon as they submit their credentials to the Office of Admission. Everybody is admitted to COLT without screening. Passing the admission test is no longer a requirement for joining COLT (the English admission test has been canceled). Only students who transfer from other colleges to COLT are required to take the English admission test. The Office of Admission does not abide by COLT's enrollment quota. The high attrition rate and high percentage of failing students who re-register the following semester add to the problem. It is difficult for those who fail and would like to transfer to another college to do so due to strict rules and regulations.

In addition, each semester thousands of male and female students take the General English course (English 101) that students in the Colleges of Arts, Education and Administrative Sciences are required to take and the ESP course the completion of which

is a prerequisite to admission to the college of Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering, Science, Applied Medical Sciences, and Computer Science (about 4500 female students per semester). A large number of instructors is needed to cover the General English and ESP courses.

Every year, COLT loses female faculty, however the turnover is low. It is difficult to find external recruits especially after September 11 and because of the unstable situation in the Middle East and the Blasts in Riyadh and other cities. Some foreign faculty are interviewed and given the job, but they do not show up. Foreign faculty prefer to work in other Gulf countries or at private institutes where the pay, benefits and job conditions are better. It is also difficult to find internal recruits with a Ph.D. or an M.A. degree. COLT loses Saudi faculty as well. Some move, retire, quit, or go back to graduate school. Some work for few weeks, then quit. COLT has no long-term plan for preparing Saudi EFL instructors. Saudi male college graduates go for an M.A. & Ph.D. degree but many females are not interested in studying abroad. COLT does not have sufficient funds for recruitment and resources. As a state university, King Saud University depends on a budget from government. They are not allowed to charge tuition and contributions and endowments go to the university general account not to individual colleges or departments. Procedures to withdraw money from the university general account are complicated. Job vacancies are not advertised on the university intranet or on Internet websites such as Dave's ESL café. Information about vacancies is not available online. E-mail is rarely used in correspondence between job applicants and recruiters and online interviews (teleconferencing) are not used in recruiting. In short, the current staffing practices at COLT do not meet the increases in female freshman enrollments.

## **8. Recommendations and Conclusions**

Since large freshman class sizes at COLT were found to have a negative effect on student achievement (grammar taken as an example), on student and instructor attitudes, on classroom instruction, and result in staffing problems and insufficient resources and classrooms, efforts to reduce class size should be taken seriously. A class size reduction fund should be established. Such a fund will help recruit more instructors, provide professional development for new and veteran teachers, and purchase educational

resources. Class-size reduction funds will help create more manageable classrooms so that teachers could focus on teaching and spend less time on discipline, taking attendance and paperwork. Since the cost of class size reduction is enormous, public support for the level of funding needed to substantially reduce class size through expansion of college facilities and staff is called for.

Second, to accommodate the larger number of freshman students, innovative methods of instruction can be introduced. Weber and Hunt (1977) recommended use of technology in the teaching of EFL courses to supplement classroom instruction. Gillette (1996) asserted that electronic media provide new opportunities for engaging college students in and out of the classroom. Electronic mail, teleconferencing, and Internet resources can increase instructor availability and extend class discussion.

Each semester, COLT should conduct prediction studies based on enrollment, statistics, attrition rate, percentage of passing, failing, and returning students in previous semesters, and total number of retiring and resigning faculty. COLT should have a long-term staffing plan for preparing Saudi faculty through graduate studies. Technology can be used in the recruiting process such as having an online job center, allowing candidates to submit their CV's online, using e-mail in correspondence, posting information about job vacancies online and using videoconferencing in job interviews. It is advisable that when foreign faculty submit their resignation letters, vacancies are advertised and recruiting is started months in advance. All parties involved in recruiting and student admission should be made aware of the large enrollments and staffing problems. The college may seek new financial resources, contributions and endowments. Recruiting efforts should be intensified.

To reduce the number of freshman enrollment at COLT, an admission test should be given prior to admission. Those who fail a course should be encouraged to transfer. Transferring criteria should be made flexible. Rules and regulations for transferring to other colleges should be made more lenient. Every effort must be made to inform the university administration, Ministry of Higher Education and the public of the outcomes of large enrollment through conferences, newspapers, satellite T.V. and the Internet.

Classroom assignment should be based on section size not tradition or coordinator convenience. Large classrooms should be assigned to large section even if sections of the

same level are scattered all over the COLT buildings. Teaching hours can be extended until 3:00 or 4:00 p.m. instead of 1:00 p.m. so that more sections can use the language and computer labs. Large classrooms in other departments and divisions may be utilized as well. No classroom should remain free at any time.

Each semester, statistics about course enrollment by course, by section and by level should be kept for several years. High attrition rates among freshman students at COLT should receive special attention. Factors that affect freshman students' attrition and withdrawal from the courses are still open for further investigation.

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### Appendix (1) Student Questionnaire

- (i) *What are the advantages and disadvantages of learning English (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary) in a large class with more than 50 students?*

.....  
.....

- (ii) *What are the positive and negative effects of studying in a large class on the following:*

- *seating capacity and arrangement*
- *attendance*
- *classroom atmosphere*
- *your achievement*
- *attitude & enthusiasm*
- *classroom interaction and participation in activities*
- *language practice*
- *class work & assignments*
- *receiving feedback from the teacher*
- *using the language and computer labs*
- *teacher-student relationship*
- *student-student relationship*

- (iii) *What things do you not like about studying in a large class?*

.....  
.....

- (iv) *What is the optimal class size for you?*

.....  
.....

### Appendix (2) Instructor Questionnaire-Survey

- (1) *What are the advantages and disadvantages of teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary building courses to freshman students in large classes (above 50 students)?*

.....  
.....

- (2) *What are the positive and negative effects of teaching large classes on the following:*

- *attendance*
- *attitude, enthusiasm & morale*
- *classroom atmosphere*

- teaching techniques used
- language activities & practice
- classroom interaction and participation in activities
- class work & assignments
- frequency of evaluation
- grading of assignments and exams
- giving feedback
- seating arrangement
- students' achievement
- student-student relationship
- teacher-student relationship
- classroom management
- using the language and computer labs
- availability and use of college equipment (e.g.: cassette players, LCD projector, OHP ...etc.)

(3) *What things can you not do with large classes?*

.....

(4) *How do you feel about teaching large classes?*

.....

(5) *What is the optimal class size for you?*

.....

### **Appendix (3)**

#### **Administrator Questionnaire-Survey**

(a) *What are the disadvantages of offering English language courses to large classes (above 50 students)*

.....

(b) *What problems are caused by large freshman classes in relation to the following:*

- *facilities management (classrooms and labs)*
- *resources and facilities availability and utilization*
- *program staffing*
- *scheduling*
- *student grouping and seating arrangements in classrooms and labs*
- *invigilation*
- *keeping and following students' records*
- *academic advising*

(c) *What are the causes of large freshman student enrollments at COLT?*

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(d) *How do you solve the understaffing problems?*

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(d) *What is the optimal class size for you?*

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